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ABSTRACT

A case study examined the implementation of a schoolwide writing program established in a California middle school through a district sponsored school improvement program (SIP). Conducted at an urban sprawl southern California school of approximately 900 students in grades seven and eight, the program was directed and implemented by the English department. Staff training was given to the entire faculty, with extra inservice meetings for the three English, social science, and science teachers who implemented the materials developed for their classes. Data were collected through participant observation, examination of student writings, a "Stages of Concern" questionnaire, the written "School Improvement Plan," and examination of student scores on a proficiency test given before and after implementation of the program. Findings showed (1) that departments were interested in collaborating in the program; (2) that materials developed for the teachers were used but they often had to be modified; (3) that other departments showed an interest in implementing writing techniques in their classrooms; (4) that writing proficiency increased after a year of implementation, with 58% of students passing the proficiency exam as opposed to 34% previously; and (5) that English teachers proposed the program be continued another year, with more time for teachers to coach their colleagues in techniques. Some questions emerging from the study concern the responsibility for teaching the research paper, responsibility for setting guidelines, departmental cooperation, and how teachers model writing behavior. (Six tables and 21 references are included.) (JC)

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Staff Development in the Implementation of a Schoolwide Writing Program

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Staff Development in the Implementation
of a Schoolwide Writing Program

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of a schoolwide writing program that was established in a middle school through a district-sponsored School Improvement Program. The principal method of data collection in this case study was participant observation. The study was conducted at a middle school of approximately 900 students in grades 7 and 8 in an urban sprawl community in southern California. The writing program was directed and implemented by the English department. Staff training was given to the whole faculty and to the English. social science. and science departments. One teacher from each of these departments implemented materials developed for them: they were observed and student written products were examined. The Stages of Concern Questionnaire (Hall and Loucks. 1979) was administered to English. social science. and science teachers. The written School Improvement Plan was another source of information about each department's assessment of its role in the writing program. Student scores on the district's writing assessment proficiency test were examined at the end of one year of the writing program.

This case study focused on five areas:

1. Do members of the English. social science. and science departments differ in their levels of concern about implementing writing across the curriculum?
2. Do the three teachers for whom materials are being developed actually use these materials to implement writing across the curriculum in their classrooms?
3. What is each department's assessment of its role in the writing program?
4. Does student writing ability increase at the end of one year of the writing across the curriculum program?
5. What do English teachers do when they are directed to plan inservice programs in writing across the curriculum?

Staff Development in the Implementation of a Schoolwide Writing Program

Writing across the curriculum is one type of curriculum development project which is being implemented in many schools. Such a project is based on the concept that writing is learning: writing promotes a clearer understanding of subject matter by helping students formulate ideas and discover new meanings and relationships (Lehr, 1982). Lehr (1982) feels that the time is right for English teachers to take the initiative in establishing schoolwide writing programs. The awareness of the need for writing instruction contributes to the popularity of such programs. LaPointe (1986) contends that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows the lack of progress in the writing skills of students in the United States. Even though research efforts are increasing the understanding of the writing process and money is directed toward improving writing proficiency, student writing is not significantly improved. Applebee (1981) demonstrates that although teachers agree that writing activities should have an important place in a variety of subject areas, students spend only about 3% of their school time on writing of paragraph length or longer. Applebee also concludes (1984) that the high school years are a time of transition from reliance on primarily time-ordered or descriptive modes of presentation toward more analytic methods of

organization.

In general, there are two approaches to the implementation of curriculum projects. The first approach stresses implementation on a schoolwide or districtwide basis (Hall and Loucks, 1978; McLaughlin and Berman, 1977, Sparks et al., 1985; Wilson, 1985). Change is implemented "from the top." A program for staff development is "moved into" the subject school, or both district and teachers are involved in training in a determined focus area (team teaching, mastery learning, etc.). The second approach stresses implementation on an individual-by-individual basis (Bolarsky, 1985; Joyce and Showers, 1982; Showers, 1985; Watson, 1981). Even though staff development may be available to all members of the school or district staff, teachers decide individually whether or not they are going to participate.

One example of the schoolwide/districtwide approach which exists in California is the School Improvement Plan (SIP), a district-directed focus on one or two goals and on large-scale staff development. The SIP is directed by a School Site Council, composed equally of certificated and non-certificated employees on the one hand, and clients (parents and students) on the other hand. The second approach -- with the individual as the center -- is characterized by coaching, peer evaluation, and curriculum projects like the National Writing Project (Donlan, 1980; Ellis, 1981; Lange, 1981; McQuade and Ponsot, 1981; Shook, 1981). Teachers who choose to participate in the National Writing

Project apply to attend summer training sessions and usually receive a stipend for their participation.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of a schoolwide writing program that was established in a middle school through a district-sponsored School Improvement Program. The principal was an enthusiastic supporter of the review process within the school and of the emphasis on a curricular area as a schoolwide focus of instruction. The faculty did have a voice in the selection of the curricular area, but it was not possible for them to have "no area for a schoolwide focus." The school was organized toward a top-down implementation of the program. It was decided at the district level that the school would participate in the plan. The principal was assigned the responsibility of forming a School Site Council and overseeing the completion of the School Plan. Attendance at the beginning inservice training sessions was mandatory: the English department was assigned the task of co-ordinating the program since the instructional focus was writing across the curriculum and the principal thought this department was best equipped to deal with writing.

This case study focused on five areas:

1. Do members of the English, social science, and science departments differ in their levels of concern about implementing

writing across the curriculum?

2. Do the three teachers for whom materials are being developed actually use these materials to implement writing across the curriculum in their classrooms?

3. What is each department's assessment of its role in the writing program?

4. Does student writing ability increase at the end of one year of the writing across the curriculum program?

5. What do English teachers do when they are directed to plan inservice programs in writing across the curriculum?

METHODOLOGY

The principal method of data collection in this case study was participant observation. The study was conducted at a middle school of approximately 900 students in grades 7 and 8 in an urban sprawl community in southern California. Students were enrolled in classes by their ability and achievement: there were classrooms for students who were designated as gifted and/or talented, classrooms for average students who had passed the district's writing proficiency test (required for graduation from high school), and classrooms for average students who had not passed the district's writing proficiency test at the beginning of the school year.

The entire school participated in two introductory workshops on a specific kind of composition program (Power Writing by

J.E. Sparks). Both were conducted at after-school faculty meetings, one in September and one in October. Teachers in the English department were given additional inservice training and planning time on three occasions: once in October, once in February, and once in March. The social science and science departments were given one additional inservice training session in January for 2 1/2 hours. The department chairmen met separately on two additional occasions with the researcher for 45 minutes. In addition, one science, one social science, and one English teacher were interviewed six times between October and January for 30 minutes (per interview) to help in the development of curricular materials that would be helpful to these teachers in implementing the program in their classrooms. All of the interviews with the teachers occurred on school grounds, often in the faculty lounge during the teacher's daily preparation period. Written notes were kept on the interviews; it was thought that tape recording the interviews might inhibit teacher comments. Student written products were examined from two lessons presented by the social science and science teacher helping with the development of curricular materials.

The Stages of Concern Questionnaire (Hall et al., 1979) was administered to teachers of the English, social science, and science departments. The Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoC) was based upon the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall and Loucks, 1978), which provided a conceptual structure for dealing

with individuals' concerns as they engaged in the adoption of an innovation. Hall et al. concluded that an individual's stages of concern move through the progresion from self, to task, to impact: their research data verified the existence of such stages. Individuals had more than one concern at a time, but some stages are of relatively higher or lower intensity. The Stages of Concern Questionnaire had high internal reliability and high test-retest correlations. The validity of the instrument was demonstrated by relating scores on the questionnaire to each other and to other variables as concerns theory would suggest (Hall et al., 1979). The SoC Questionnaire contained 35 items composed into Likert-type scale format, each with seven possible responses. There were five items for each of the seven stages. For example, one item stated: "I am concerned about evaluating my impact on students." (Hall et al. 1979). Teachers indicated if the statement was "irrelevant," "not true of me now," "somewhat true of me now," or "very true of me now." For this study, when the questionnaire was administered to the teachers, writing across the curriculum was clearly identified as the innovation. It took approximately 15 minutes to administer the questionnaire. Teachers were requested to complete the questionnaire in January at the end of departmental inservice meetings and to indicate their departments.

The written School Improvement Plan, drafted by faculty members, was intended to be both a blueprint for curriculum

development and a means for assessing compliance with the objectives established by the School Site Council. Each department submitted its own department plan; the plan was integrated and formally written by a faculty committee.

Eighth grade students took the school district's high school competency test at the end of the year. These students took four parts of this test. Multiple-choice tests were given in reading, math, and writing skills. The fourth test was a writing sample assessment: students were given 45 minutes to write one paragraph on a given topic, and students either passed or failed the test.

ANALYSIS

1. Do members of the English, social science, and science departments differ in their levels of concern about implementing writing across the curriculum?

Results of the Stages of Concern Questionnaire indicated that there were differences in the department members' level of concern and these results were related to the department in which the teacher taught. Three of the four science teachers completed

(Insert Table I)

the questionnaire. All three members were at the first three stages of concern about the implementation. These first three stages all relate to concerns about the "self" as the individual was involved with the implementation. All four of the science teachers taught nothing but science courses; they were not

assigned to teach courses in another department.

Eight of the nine social science teachers completed the questionnaire. This department consisted of individuals who taught only social science and those who taught social science courses as well as courses in other departments. Only those teachers who taught at least half their course load in the social sciences completed the questionnaire and attended the departmental inservice training sessions. Members of this department were divided into three groups. Three teachers were at the first stage of "awareness" and one teacher was at the "informational" stage. These four teachers were at stages similar to those of the science teachers. They had concerns about themselves as individuals implementing a new program. Two of the social science teachers were at the "management" stage of concern. These concerns were related to the task and were interpreted to indicate that the individual was implenting the innovation to some degree. One teacher was at the "consequence" stage and one at the "collaboration" stage. This indicated that these teachers passed the stages concerned with "self" and "task" and were concerned about the impact of the program.

The English department was also divided into three groups: five teachers were considered "full-time" English teachers. They attended the inservice training sessions and the department planning sessions. Four of them completed the Stages of Concern Questionnaire since one of the five teachers was absent the day

the questionnaire was administered. Of these four teachers, one was at the "personal" stage of concern. Although this stage was still concerned with the individual's relationship to the innovation, it was the last stage in the "self" stages. One member had "management" concerns, relating to the task. Two members had "collaboration" concerns. They were concerned about the impact of the program.

In conclusion, then, the members of the English, social science, and science departments were at different levels of concern and use about the implementation of writing across the

(Insert Table II)

curriculum. The science teachers were primarily non-users. They were either not concerned about the innovation, wanted to know more about it, or were concerned with its affect on themselves. The English teachers were more involved in the implementation of writing across the curriculum. Although they were not all at the same level of concern or implementation, only one was at the "self" level. The other teachers were involved with implementing the program and/or with assessing its impact on children and within the total school program. The social science department had several teachers who were at the beginning levels of concern and implementation as well as teachers who were concerned with the impact of the program and collaboration efforts with other departments.

The written School Improvement Plan supported these

conclusions even though the written school plan emerged approximately four months after the SoC Questionnaire was administered. According to the School Plan, the science

(See Table III)

department was composed essentially of non-users: there was no mention of writing in the school plan for the science department. The English department was past the informational stage: the written school plan reflected department interest in promoting "continued improvement in the writing program." The social science department, composed of non-users and those with management concerns, expressed a collaboration concern: the school plan indicated an interest in "articulation between the English and social studies department in writing standards..."

2. Do the three teachers for whom materials are being developed actually use these materials to implement writing across the curriculum in their classrooms?

The three teachers who met with the researcher were given a variety of materials, all of which were co-ordinated with the text the teachers were using. The English teacher repeatedly requested help modifying her existing material. She wanted to make the materials that were available to her more effective in terms of student achievement. She did not use several of the worksheets that were given to her: these activities related to paraphrasing news stories and writing short, descriptive

paragraphs. She did, however, use every worksheet that was modified for her classes that were taken from her already existing materials. The modification of the materials involved limiting the number of multiple choice answers from which the student had to choose and reducing the number of problems the student was asked to do. In short, the material was simplified.

The science teacher accepted the material he was given. When he was asked to bring student work to the interviews, however, he said he had difficulty using the material because students were unable to complete the assignments. He requested material that would teach scientific vocabulary. From that point on, he was given material that provided scientific vocabulary instruction. These materials included activities involving paraphrasing, illustrating with diagrams the meaning of different scientific terms and formulas, and completing dictionary-related word meaning activities. In addition, he was given a prepared lesson plan which directed the students to present scientific material in a narrative assignment (e.g., "Pretend you are a drop of water taken in by a plant. Describe your trip through the plant.") Student products revealed that the students were frequently able to use similar content in a more analytic mode after such a narrative assignment. In other words, students learned the content and could express it in story form; they were then able to write about it in an analytic mode.

The social science teacher used each activity sheet that she

was given and brought samples of student work to the interviews. She indicated a preference for activities that integrated what students were learning, such as cause-effect lessons and classification activities. When student products were examined, however, it was noted that very few students in a "regular" social science class were able to complete a social studies-related writing instruction activity, whereas in a "competency" social science class more than half of the students were able to complete the same assignment. This result was not expected because the students in the "regular" class had already passed the district's proficiency test in writing while those in the competency class had not. The teacher was then observed teaching this lesson, and differences were noted in her presentation as to the degree of modeling she employed with each class. While she modeled verbally and in writing on the chalkboard how to complete the assignment to the "competency" students, she gave the directions to the "regular" students with little or no modeling. During one of the interviews, she reported that she frequently assumed that the "regular" class did not need as much basic instruction as the "competency" class, so she did not model the process involved with them to the same extent as she did with the "competency" students.

3. What is each department's assessment of its role in the writing program?

In the written school plan, other departments did indicate an interest in incorporating writing activities in their

(Insert Table IV)

programs. The Industrial Arts department wanted to have students write about project skills, interests, likes, and dislikes. The typing department displayed a desire to meet with staff to coordinate style for term papers and to develop plans for creative writing. The principal, however, did not elect to involve these teachers because she wanted to direct her attention and resources to the three departments already involved in the implementation.

4. Does student writing ability increase at the end of one year of the writing across the curriculum program?

There was a rise in student writing ability at the end of one year of the writing across the curriculum program. In 1985 (before the writing program was implemented), 34% of the 8th grade students passed the district basic skills competency test in writing skills (the writing sample assessment). In 1986 (after implementation), 58% of the 8th grade students passed this test.

(Insert Table V)

The entire district used the same methods for evaluating student tests. Student work was holistically scored by teachers who were trained in holistic scoring techniques. Student work was not

evaluated by the teachers in the students' own school.

5. What do English teachers do when they are directed to plan inservice programs in writing across the curriculum?

The English teachers in this school were assigned the responsiblity for developing and implementing a writing across the curriculum program by the school principal. They met as a department before the school year began and agreed that there was a need for whole faculty inservice training on writing. Two members of the department had been told by colleagues that a particular program was "very good." On this basis, they invited the presenter of the program to give two after school inservice training sessions, one in late September and one in October.

They met again in October and decided that the remainder of the faculty training should be given to specific departments.

(Insert Table VI)

They cited the following reasons for this shift in training:

a. There were existing tensions between members of the English and social science departments. The English teachers did not feel they could work with the social science department, at least with the chairman.

b. The English teachers felt comfortable with the teaching of writing and did not want to spend their time reviewing what was, to them, simple composition theory. They perferred to

develop and implement novel approaches, including many of the techniques and strategies coming from the National Writing Project.

c. They felt the different departments had different needs, were at different points in the implementation, and approached school learning - including writing across the curriculum - with a different philosophy. They felt each group would progress further with "tailor-made" inservice training.

d. They wanted to be relieved of some of the responsibility of the implementation. They felt that they would be held less responsible if small groups were the focus of the training, not the whole faculty. This point was verbalized by one member of the department and all other members unanimously agreed.

In January, the English teachers proposed that the program continue to be implemented through staff development activities. However, they requested that district funds be directed at obtaining substitute teachers for them so they could engage in peer coaching and team with a social science/science teacher for one or more periods a day to teach writing in the content areas. They also requested release time so the various departments could meet to articulate their goals, objectives and plan of action in order to implement writing across the curriculum in the future.

DISCUSSION

This program began as a "top-down" approach to the

implementation of writing across the curriculum. It worked in large part because the school principal wanted it to work, made resources available for the implementation, and supported staff development. It was helpful to have whole-faculty awareness-level inservice training sessions on Power Writing; this training gave everyone awareness level sessions on one way to implement a writing program. Teachers repeatedly commented that they wanted more articulation across departments for implementing Power Writing.

It was helpful, too, to present other techniques and strategies to specific departments. It is interesting to note, however, that English teachers proposed that the program be implemented the second year through peer coaching and faculty time together to articulate goals, objectives, and plans of action. The English department seemed to move from wanting to give awareness level training to all faculty members, to wanting to separate from the other two departments specifically involved in the implementation (science and social science) for department inservice training, and finally to wanting to continue training and implementation among the faculty with the departments working together. Their planning strategy followed the Stages of Concern developed by Hall et al. They began with the awareness level stages for the whole faculty and moved to the level of concern over the task with the science and social science departments, even though the science department was not yet at this stage. By

the middle of the school year, at least two of the English teachers were operating at the impact stages of concern and the other department members were able to support them in varying degrees. Although this program began as top-down implementation, mandated at the district level, the English teachers, who were held responsible for planning and developing the implementation, seemed to internalize the process of change. As they became more secure with the implementation, they moved from planning for and participating in general training sessions, to working at the department level, to wanting to work with other departments. Why did the implementation program work in this manner for the English department?

One explanation is offered by Guskey (1986) who summarizes the research on the process of teacher change and supports a model that moves from staff development to a change in teachers' classroom practices, to a change in student learning outcomes, to a change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Change is represented as a process, not an event. It is a process, however, which moves from practice to attitude. The English teachers in this study participated in several kinds of staff development, first changed classroom practices, and then changed attitudes after discovering that the students' learning increased.

IMPLICATIONS

Seven questions emerged from this case study of the implementation of writing across the curriculum, indicating areas for future research as well as guidelines for practitioners who become involved in a writing across the curriculum implementation. These same questions may not emerge from another case study, but they warrant exploration.

1. Who will teach the research paper, its format and methodology? In this school, the social science teachers taught the research paper, but many were resentful, thinking it demanded time better spent on content.

2. Is the English department going to set general guidelines for all departments in paragraph and paper writing? In this school, the departments met and agreed on general guidelines. However, enforcing the standards was left to individual teachers; as may be imagined, some teachers enforced the guides and others did not.

3. How much time will the English department spend on the teaching of writing skills that can be transferred to other content areas? Although students at the middle school level need to be taught how to write analytically, English teachers at this school expressed a concern that they were unable to spend time with creative writing because they were spending so much time teaching other kinds of writing.

4. Will mechanics of writing be taught through the editing

process or by traditional grammar approach? In this case, the English department was divided.

5. Are the departments willing to work together? Is a collaborative effort possible? If not, what can be done to make it possible?

6. Will only academic content area teachers be included in the program or will all subjects be included? What about P.E., shop, art, music, home economics? In the plan that emerged as part of the School Improvement Plan, the English and social science departments included objectives related to writing, but the science department did not. However, the shop, home economics, and typing departments showed an interest in teaching writing.

7. How will the teachers model writing behavior? Teachers must look carefully at how the writing process, techniques, and strategies will be taught.

Table I
Results of Stages of Concern Questionnaire by Department

Department	Awareness	Informational	Personal	Management	Consequence	Collaboration	Refocusing
Social Science	3	1		2	1	1	
Science	1	1	1				
English			1	1		2	

Table II
User Behavior and Attitudes during Implementation
(by Department)

Users	Feelings/ Concerns	Understanding/ How It Looked	Parts Ready/ Not Ready	What Doing/ Spending Time on
English	1.How to handle leader-ship role 2.How to teach writing skills/ grammar	Recognized importance of writing across the curriculum	1.Perceived early cycle to be "in place" 2.Encountered questions from other departments	1.Record-keeping 2.Teaching analytical/ expository writing 3.Planning toward interdepartmental articulation and collaboration
Social Science	1.Mixed: some resentful of teaching writing; others comfortable 2.Concerned with the need to collaborate with the English department	1.Confused 2.Mixed interpretation of of implementing writing in the content area 3.More awareness of writing in general	1.Looked disconnected 2.More inservice needed 3.Basic parts looked at. not much more	1.Teaching research paper skills 2.Some emphasis on prewriting and modeling

Science	1.Basically. nonusers 2.Recognize importance of writing. but not concerned with it	1.Major parts in place in English. not elsewhere 2.Limited understanding of how to use writing to increase student learning	1.Desire for a new book 2.Limited interest in using library and modeling writing	Teaching vocabulary

Table III
Printed School Plan: School Improvement by Department

Department	Area of Improvement	Action Plan
English	To promote continued improvement in the writing program, the department will establish departmental criteria for writing standards at each grade level. Further, the department will develop a sequential program of reading and writing through grades 7 and 8.	The department will develop writing standards and a sequential program of reading and writing in the fall and begin implementation in January 1987.
Mathematics	No mention of writing	
Science	No mention of writing	
Social Science	Articulation between the English and social studies departments in writing standards, research skills, and a co-ordinated library program needs to be completed	Coordinate writing standards, research skills, and library program with the English department: Attend conferences and inservices as funds are available
Band	No mention of writing	
Industrial Arts	A writing project should be incorporated into the course.	Have students write about project skills, interests, likes, and dislikes.
Physical Education	No mention of writing	
Health	No mention of writing	
The Arts	No mention of writing	
Computer	No mention of writing	
Typing	Explore ways to incorporate Power Writing into typing Put more emphasis on	Meet with staff to co-ordinate style for term papers and Power Writing

	creating at the typewriter as well as copying prewritten material. Co-ordinate stylе for term papers with other departments	-Develop plans for creative writing
Food and Nutrition	No mention of writing	
Foreign Language	No mention of writing	

Table IV
Published School Plan for School Improvement (Departments other than English, science, and social science)

Department	Area of Improvement	Action Plan
Mathematics	NO MENTION OF WRITING	
Band	NO MENTION OF WRITING	
Industrial Arts	A writing project should be incorporated into the	Have students write about project skills.
Physical Education	NO MENTION OF WRITING	
Health	NO MENTION OF WRITING	
The Arts	NO MENTION OF WRITING	
Computer	NO MENTION OF WRITING	
Typing	Explore ways to incorporate Power Writing into typing -Put more emphasis on creating at the typewriter as well as copying prewritten material.	Meet with staff to co-ordinate style for term papers and Power Writing -Develop plans for creative writing
Food and Nutrition	NO MENTION OF WRITING	
Foreign Language	NO MENTION OF WRITING	

Table V
Writing Sample Assessment

8th grade

School	Student enrollment 1985	1986	Percent passing 1985	1986
A	316	297	43%	46%
B	499	458	34%	58%
C	518	480	60%	68%
D	330	360	49%	53%
E	316	288	49%	50%
District	1,979	1,883	47%	56%

9th grade

School	Student Enrollment 1985	1986	Percent passing 1985	1986
F	542	580	35%	51%
G	511	567	39%	41%
H	596	566	53%	70%
I	523	528	30%	44%
J	4	12	25%	-
K	78	84	10%	4%
District	2,254	2,337	39%	50%

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Table VI
Staff Development Plan

May 1985	School Site Council and Faculty Select Writing Across the Curriculum as Curricular Focus for School Improvement
Spring 1985	Principal Works with English Department on Curricular Changes and Choice of New Textbook
September 1985	Whole-faculty Inservice in Power Writing
October 1985	Whole-faculty Inservice in Power Writing
October 1985	Researcher Meets with English Department
January 1986	Researcher Provides Inservice Training to Social Science and Science Departments
February 1986	Researcher Meets with English Department
Spring 1986	English Department Meets for Inservice Training on Instruction in Basic Skills and Recordkeeping
May 1986	Written School Plan Printed

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